

2004 Initiatives



Environment

**Preserving
Hawai'i's
Unique
Environment**

Hawai‘i is blessed with a unique abundance of natural resources and beauty that require thoughtful stewardship. But too often this stewardship has been reactive rather than proactive.

That is why our administration is pledging to spend \$20 million over the next four years to tackle the challenge of invasive species. This program would be unprecedented in scope and scale.



A lack of preventive action against terrestrial and marine-based invasive species both here at home, as well as in other Pacific island environments, has resulted in disastrous ecological consequences. The danger of continued inaction cannot be overemphasized.

Two-thirds of Tahiti's rain forests have been overrun by the plant miconia, resulting in substantial damage to that island's watersheds, soils and reefs.



The brown tree snake has decimated the bird population of Guam, and Hawai'i's birds are just a plane ride away. And no one who viewed Lake Wilson early last year before our massive clean up will ever doubt the destruction an invasive species can wreak here at home.

The \$5 million annually we propose will support Hawai'i's Invasive Species Council in its efforts to eradicate existing problems and prevent new species from arriving on our shores. It's important to note that



matching funds from the federal government as well as private sources would double this money to \$10 million per year.

Coupled with the invasive species initiative, we must remain vigilant in addressing man-made contaminants. That is why our administration proposes legislation to make illegal dumping of solid waste a felony. We also want to encourage private landowners to work cooperatively with the State Department of Health to clean up contaminated properties.

Improving Parks and Harbors

As an island state with an economy based to a significant extent on tourism, the environment remains a critical part of our economic well-being. Yet here too, the past practice has been one of reaction rather than positive action.

For too many years, state parks and marine resources have been poorly maintained and allowed to fall into disrepair, jeopardizing the environment, the economy and the well-being of people across the state.

To address this neglect we propose:

- **Issuing a \$14-million bond to improve state park facilities.** Our 69 parks and recreational areas accommodate more than 15 million visits a year. The funds we are requesting would be the first installment of a multi-year program to bring our parks up to the level our citizens deserve and our visitors expect.
- **Approving \$10 million to renovate small boat harbors statewide.** Safe access to the ocean and adequate, well-maintained harbors are part of both environmental stewardship and improved recreational opportunities. We have prioritized improvements to our 21 small boat harbors and 54 boat ramps on a statewide, multi-year basis. Increased boating fees would pay for bonds to fund these projects.
- **Issuing \$2.4 million in bonds for Kuhio Beach improvements.** This beach is one of the most utilized stretches of shoreline in our state, and to neglect its maintenance would be a serious oversight.

Protecting Agricultural Lands and Watersheds

Preserving the environment also means making wise decisions about the land.

Twenty-five years ago, our constitution was amended to require that the state conserve and protect agricultural land, promote diversified agriculture, increase agricultural self-sufficiency and assure the availability of agriculturally suitable lands.

Over the years, a lack of consensus between various interest groups over how important agricultural lands should be designated has stymied all attempts to pass legislation accomplishing this important mandate. Now an opportunity exists to fulfill the mandate through the collaborative efforts of many.

We are seeking legislation that would allow the counties to play a key role in identifying important agricultural lands, as guided by standards and criteria set by the legislature. Final approval would rest with the Land Use Commission.

To further support agriculture, we are requesting in the supplemental budget:

- \$3 million dollars in state funds and \$3.25 million in federal funds for the Upcountry Maui Watershed project. This money would finance feeder lines for developing and sustaining diversified agricultural operations in this important area.
- \$500,000 for Moloka'i irrigation system improvements.

Hand in hand with agricultural preservation is the need to protect and preserve Hawai'i's watersheds. Last year we formed the Hawai'i Alliance of Watershed Partnerships to promote coordination among the state's seven existing watershed partnerships.

Encouraging Alternative Energy

Hawai'i's middle-of-the-ocean location can be both a blessing and a curse. It's expensive to ship crude oil to Hawai'i, and limited retail competition means the price of gas is steep. We also pay highest-in-the-nation electricity bills.

At the same time, we are blessed with a diversity of natural energy sources, including wave action, wind, geothermal, biomass and year-round sun.

Conservation, waste-to-energy programs and alternative energy initiatives can reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and move Hawai'i to the forefront in terms of progressive energy policies. To demonstrate our commitment and leadership role, we propose:

- Enacting standards requiring 20% of all electricity sold in the year 2020 to come from renewable sources. This ambitious goal would be mandated in steps through a balance of incentives and penalties.
- Exempting non-fossil fuels from the state fuel tax.
- Changing the existing ethanol fuel tax credit to link tax incentives with actual production of these fuels. Ethanol is a clean-burning fuel made from plant products such as sugar cane waste. Several companies stand poised to build ethanol facilities in Hawai'i, and this legislation would lay the foundation.